



# The New Amberola GRAPHIC

Spring  
Issue

→ See  
Dated  
Auctions in!  
This Issue!

Deadline for  
Next Issue:  
July 1!!

April, 1990

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April, 1990  
(Spring)

# The New Amberola Graphic

Issue No. 72  
(Vol. XVIII, No. 4)

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## Revised Notice

Advertisers who wish to prepare dated auction lists, etc., should keep in mind that delivery of the GRAPHIC sometimes takes upwards of three weeks to reach some parts of the country and Canada. We advise closing dates of no sooner than May 31, August 31, November 30 and February 28 for dated matter.

## Editor's Notes

First, a word about changes of address. Issue 71 broke all records for returns...8 copies came back (with postage due) because we were not informed of address changes. We remind readers that second class mail does not automatically get forwarded -- so let us know when you move.

Secondly, some notes about advertising. It takes at least two weeks from the typing stages till the GRAPHIC gets mailed. Therefore, it is important that the deadline for the following issue be observed. While there is some leeway in this, we cannot guarantee that an ad will get in if it is received after the deadline.

The GRAPHIC is printed from "camera ready" originals; therefore, do not send negatives of your ad.

A sharp, black image works best. A worn typewriter ribbon produces disappointing results.

Illustrations help an ad, but photographs must be screened (changed to dots) before they can be printed. An 85 line screen is usually recommended.

### Orlando Marsh Revisited

The feature in the winter issue brought a tremendous response from our readers...all of it favorable! While most readers offered their appreciation for the article, a few were able to make additions and identifications to the material presented.

- 1) The records (pp. 5 - 8). We did not try to show one of each of the various labels from the Marsh Labs, but, rather, a variety of those known to have emanated from its studios. Illustration no. 1 contained what Max Vreede thought to be the earliest issued matrix number, along with his comment that nos. 30 and 35 were the earliest known matrices to be found on a test pressing. Reader Bill Bryant reports that his Crown of "No Night There" uses matrix #150, while Fred Smith's Crown of "Cradle Song" shows a matrix #149. Bill Shaman has a 12" Crown of "Kamennoi Ostrow, Angelique Reve" using matrix #163. Some of these Crowns bear a 5 3/8" label advertising other records in the series, which we illustrate below. Bill, by the way, remarked that the tonal quality of his 12" Crown was extraordinary:

"What it lacks in volume it makes up in almost exquisite clarity. But two things suggest that possibly Marsh was, even then, experimenting with some primitive electrical process: first, the timbre of the piano, which is quite unlike that of any acoustical piano recordings I've heard--even Brunswicks. There is an unusual resonant low-frequency response throughout. Also suggestive of some mysterious (electrical?) funny business is the pre-recording 'hum' one hears as the stylus meets the first modulated grooves, similar to what we hear on most very early electrics, especially 1925 and 1926 Orthophonics."



above: advertising label from the blank side of Bill Shaman's and Fred Smith's Crown discs.

right: Kurt Nauck's Packard disc.

But the prize (as well as surprise) comes from Les Docks, who turned up with not only the lowest known matrix numbers, but his appear to have been issued -- and on yet another variation of the Autograph label design!

Kurt Nauck shares with us what may be the handsomest of Marsh label designs: a talk for the Packard Motor Car Co., graced with a Packard Six touring car.

Referring to our illustration no. 17, Bill Shaman points out that he has some sides made for the National Garden Bureau of Chicago on the Electra label. His pressings are definitely from Columbia, including matrix and take numbers embossed in the wax being identical to those used by Columbia...although the sound quality reveals it to be "terribly shrill and unbalanced," indicating that the recording is not a Columbia.

Finally, a bit of controversy surrounds our illustration no. 27. George Blacker feels there is evidence suggesting this is actually a Brunswick recording, having nothing to do with Marsh. In any event, can anyone decipher the "LTR" matrix prefix?

- 2) Patent (page 9). A couple of readers have figured out what's going on here. Marsh invented what he called an "electric tap" -- a means of altering existing electrical fixtures in order to plug lamps or appliances into them! In the case of the first four illustrations, we see that an ordinary push-button wall switch has been modi-

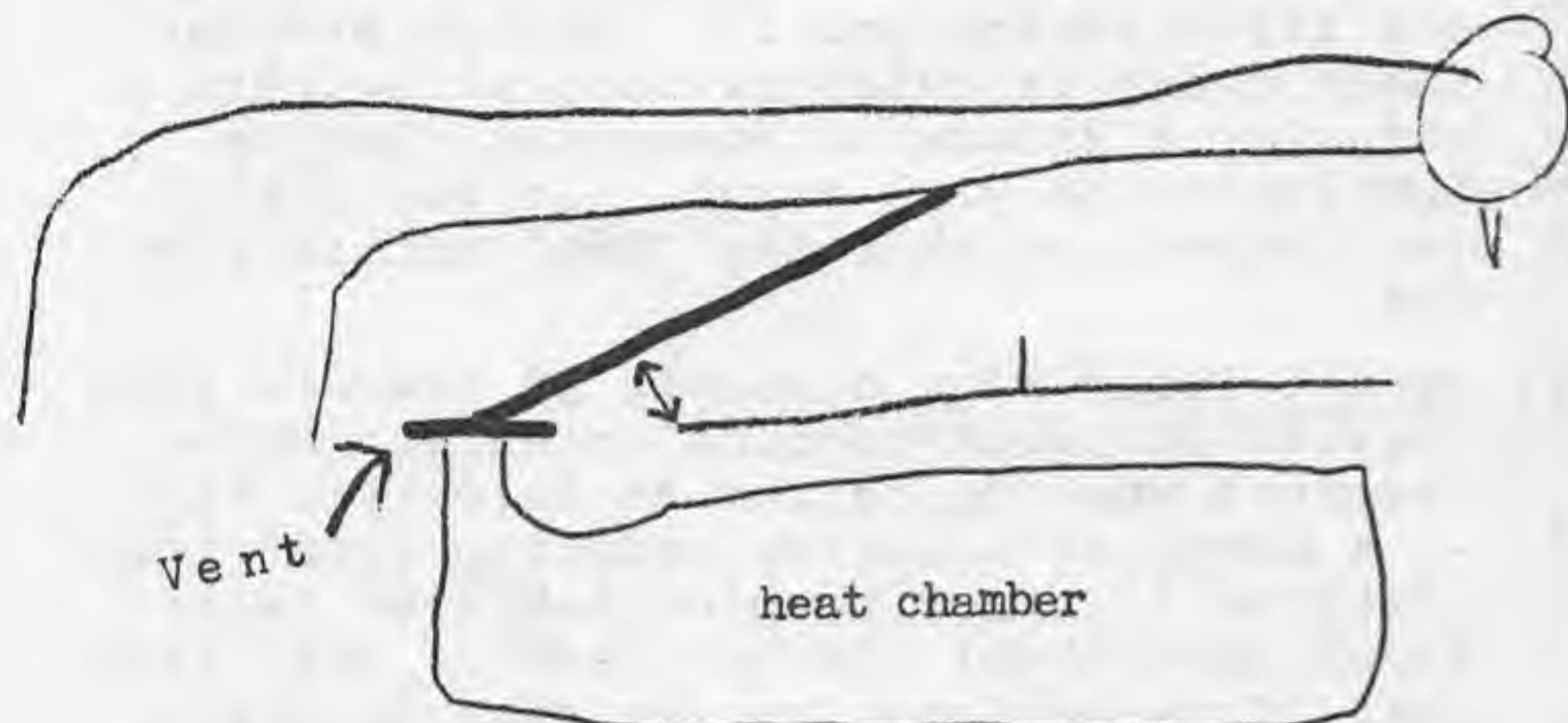


Les Docks' two low-numbered Marsh matrices. #24 at left and #25 below.

4. fied so that the plate now extends out from the wall, making access for a plug to be plugged into its base. A clever idea in the days of few electrical outlets, but apparently the idea never caught on in a big way.

3) Illustrations (pp.12-13). The odd turntable pictured on page 12 and again on the bottom of page 13 is not at all what we had imagined and, in fact, may not be related to Marsh at all due to its supplier's name and address. Nevertheless, it's a fascinating piece of equipment, and we thank Bob Waltrip for identifying it:

"The weird turntable gizmo is a kerosene-powered turntable. The thing hanging under the tone arm is not an electrical wire but a safety brake. The big black knob is the wick, and the little white knob is a flint lighter/starter. The safety brake works like this:

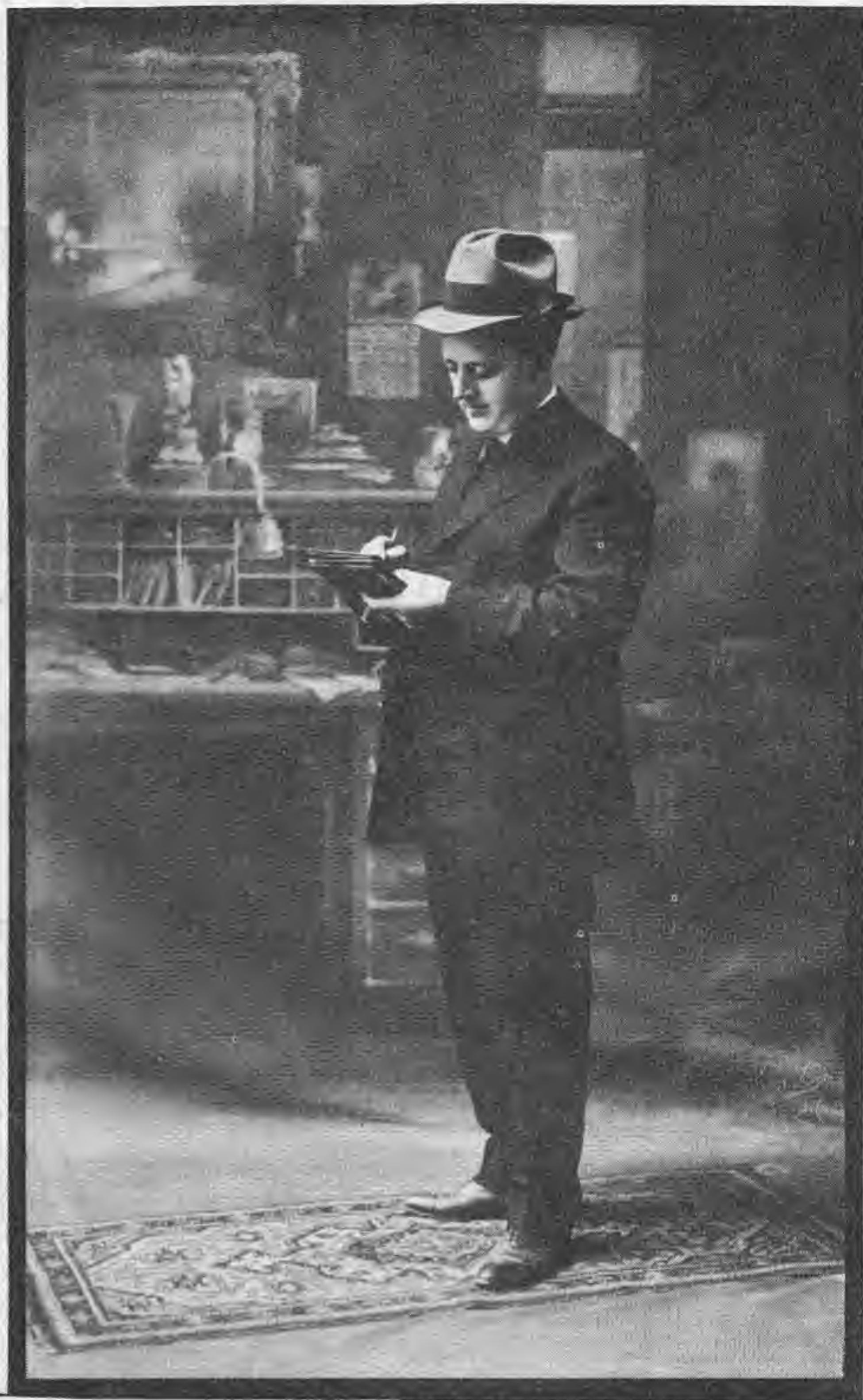


When the tone arm is on the outer portion of the record, the brake lever covers a vent. When the tone arm reaches the center of the record, the brake lever hits the edge of the turntable and lifts off the vent, allowing heat to escape."

The picture of Marsh with early recording apparatus, top of page 13, did not reproduce as well as we had hoped (even though the original is damaged), and this illustration is important enough to give it a second try.

(see next page)

Finally, Bill Bryant came up with an additional photo of Orlando Marsh. This undated shot was taken in the Smit Art Studio of South Chicago with a backdrop of an office interior. Note that this backdrop is a bit wrinkled near its bottom!



## IN REVIEW

Edison Disc Artists & Records: Additional Pages, by Raymond Wile and Ronald Dethlefsen.

So much new material has been unearthed since the original edition of their "EDAR" that a revised and expanded edition of the work seemed inevitable. Happily for those possessing the original edition, however, the authors decided to issue a special softbound volume containing the majority of this new material. Hence, a complete book of "additional pages"!

As with the parent edition, the additional pages contain a great diversity of material relating to Edison discs. Here are all of the weekly advance bulletins of the needle-cut records. A revision devoted to the electrotype label styles is included. More artists

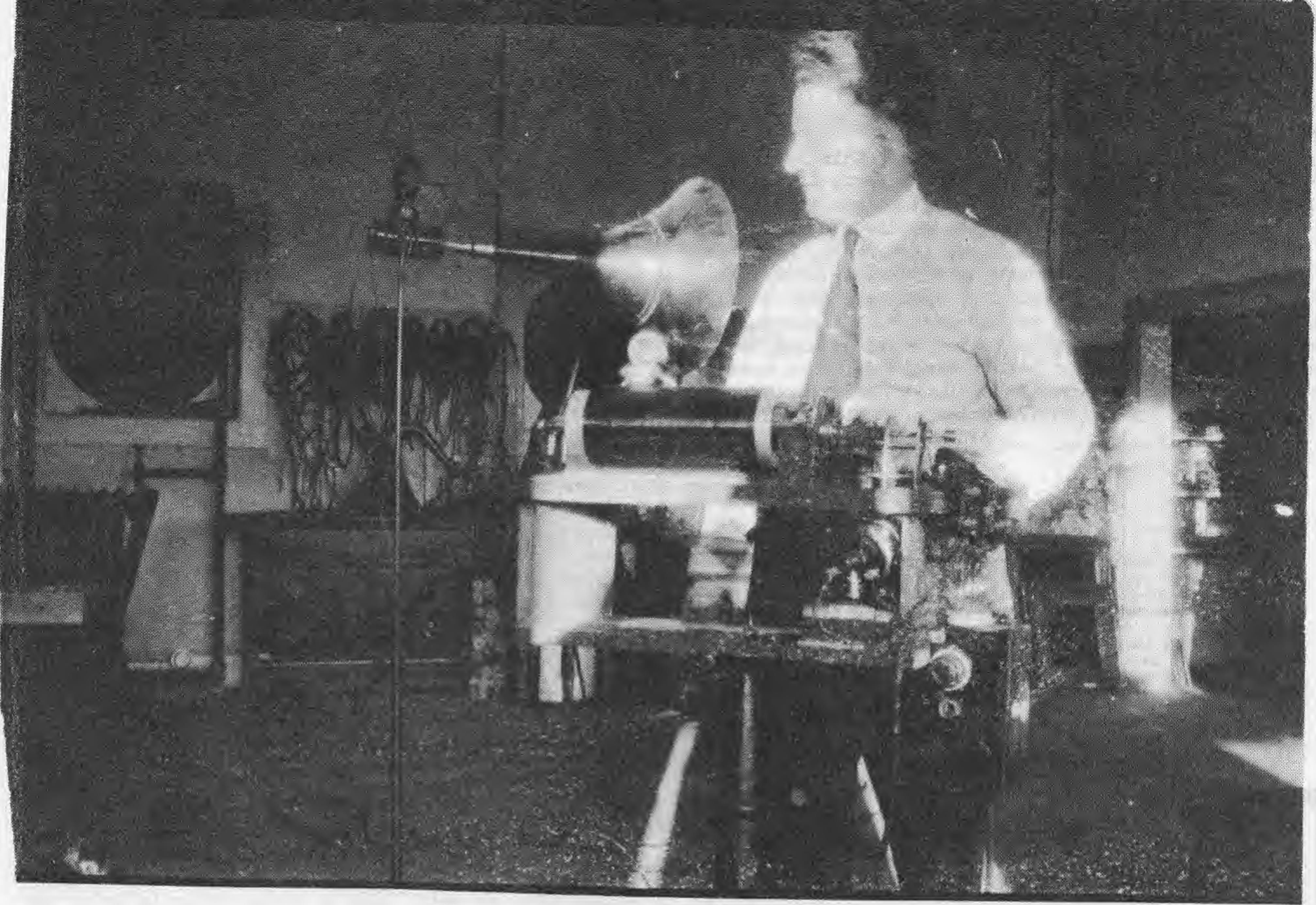
and label variations are pictured. Internal communication covering 12" Diamond Discs, the installation of a studio organ, and the Morse telegraph record of 1920 has been reproduced. Of special importance is a 1926 letter from Walter Miller to Thomas Edison urging him to authorize electrical recording experiments, complete with an emphatic denial from "The Old Man."

There is much more contained in the book's 96 pages. There's a complete listing of all lp masters (issued and unissued), more color reproductions, revisions of the artist and pseudonym lists, master mould cards from 1929, notes from the studio cash books, an article with Ben Tongue on the lp's, etc., etc., etc.

When combined with the original edition, these works provide the collector with a goldmine of fascinating information dealing with Edison discs and their artists. A minor complaint of the "Additional Pages" volume is a confusing and almost useless page numbering system. These pages are somehow keyed to correspond with the original edition, but the method devised just doesn't work -- and frequently makes no sense.

Aside from this minor flaw, the new book has everything going for it, and it is printed on heavy coat-

(cont. next page)



ed stock and is quality printing throughout. It also comes with a bonus: a recently discovered supplement of the February, 1913 preliminary listing of Edison discs, which was received too late for inclusion in the book itself. Edison Disc Artists & Records: Additional Pages is available directly from the author at \$16.95, postpaid. Contact: Ron Dethlefson, 3605 Christmas Tree Lane, Bakersfield, CA 93306.

The Edison Phonograph Monthly, Vol. XIV (1916), published by Wendell Moore.

The fourteenth and final volume in this series of monthly journals for Edison dealers was recently issued, completing a valuable reference set begun over a decade ago.

This final full year of E.P.M. is now devoted exclusively to cylinder machines and records, as it was prior to the introduction of the Diamond Disc. And while virtually all of the cylinders are now being dubbed from Diamond Discs, not all of those discs actually made it into production. 191 finds the company still making a healthy push for the cylinder line, as evidenced by monthly announcements of how many new dealers have signed on.

As always, there are photos of artists, monthly record lists, advertising copy, news of dealers, jobbers, artists and Mr. Edison, repair hints, store window and interior illustrations, sales hints, and, above all, a positive feeling that the Amberola and its records are here to stay: "The Edison Diamond Amberola is musically superior to any sound-reproducing device not bearing the name of Edison."

In addition, Mr. Moore has given us a reprint of a rare issue of "Our Plant" - a 12-page in-house magazine published for Edison employees by a youthful Theodore Edison.

For information regarding single years or a complete run of The Edison Phonograph Monthly, contact Wendell Moore directly at: 3085 W. Highway 89-A, Sedona, AZ 86336.

#### Australian Record and Music Review

This interesting new periodical reached us recently from New South Wales. While largely devoted to recordings, this may be the first collector's magazine dealing with both records and music. The first issue has a piece on the Australian composer Marsh Little, his music ("The Sweetest Story Ever Told," etc.) as well as recordings by him. Even though the Review's contents are devoted to Australian material, several topics have overseas connections, such as the Australian issues of the early 30s U.S.-recorded Columbia fine groove records, or the Sydney recordings of Nebraska-born Tom Swift. But by far, the biggest surprise came with a discovery of a U.S. label most Americans have never seen: Clarité. These discs apparently came from Plaza Music Co., used regular Banner-type masters, and were all pressed here for export to Australia!

The Australian Record and Music Review is a quarterly publication and is the brainchild of Mike Sutcliffe. Annual subscriptions in the U.S. are 21 Australian dollars and can be obtained by writing Mike at 15 Lowanna Ave., Baulkham Hills, NSW 2153, Australia.

# 6. Curiosity Corner

## "Just Shocking, Mr. Edison!"

Reader Fred MacFee discovered this letter and drawing at the Broadcast Pioneers Library in Washington, D.C. Although it has nothing to do with the phonograph, we find it intriguing enough to include here. Apparently Mr. Barker and Dr Weir wanted to shock their friends (under the guise of "physiological work"!) with this apparatus. Edison's remarks at the bottom are: "The rosin'd leather gave tremendous longitudinal vibration Spring S was very heavy so as to permit amplitude so to speak to the longitudinal movement" Would it really work? We leave this to our inventive readers to find out!

3909 Locust Street  
Philadelphia, December 27, 1885

My dear Edison:--

Some years ago you told me of some effects of mechanical vibration which you had obtained which closely resembled those produced by a shock machine upon the system. My friend Dr. Weir Mitchell desires to repeat those experiments, in connection with his physiological work and I have tried to reproduce them. But I can get no more than a tingling sensation by this rapid vibration, the part becoming numb. I understood you to say that in your experiments you obtained the same violent cramping of the muscles that is produced by a secondary high tension current. Will you be good enough to describe to me an apparatus by which I can get the results, as well as the conditions necessary? and oblige

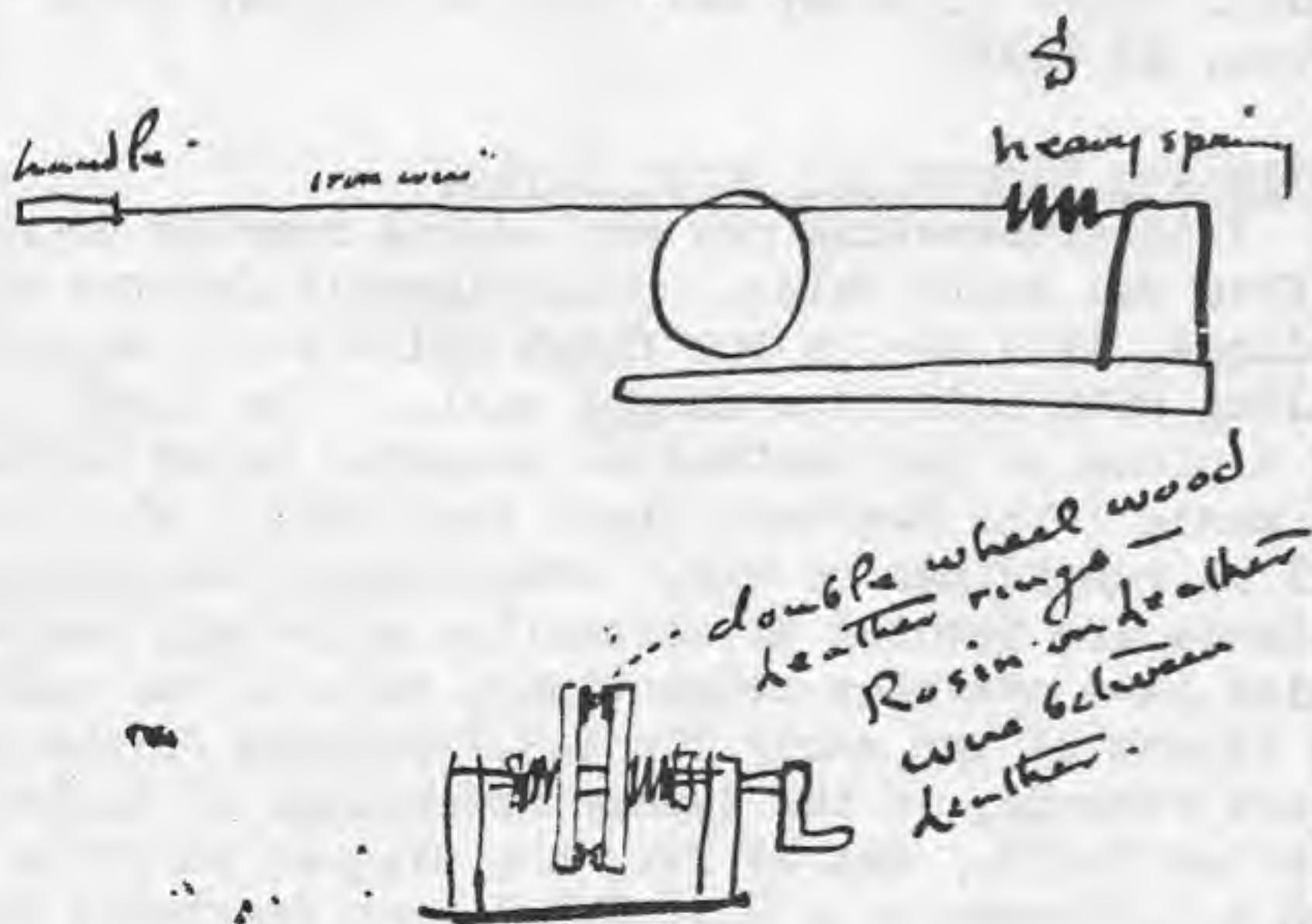
Yours truly,  
George F. Barker

THOMAS A. EDISON,  
No. 65 FIFTH AVENUE.

NEW YORK, Dec 28 1885

Friend Barker

I do not remember exactly how  
I had the arrangement I think it was  
this way



The rosin'd leather gave tremendous  
longitudinal vibration Spring S was  
very heavy so as to permit amplitude  
so to speak to the longitudinal movement  
Yours  
Edison

## PHONOGRAPH FORUM

by George Paul

### The Victor Auxetophone

In 1906, the full extent of the talking machine's impact was not yet realized. Edison's exhortation that he "...want(ed) to see a Phonograph in every American home" was as yet based upon wishful thinking rather than probability. Off-beat designs for talking alarm clocks and mailable record/letters abounded in learned publications such as The Scientific American. The idea of making recorded music available to restaurant and hotel patrons didn't seem much stranger then than it does to us now. Enter the Auxetophone.

Invented by Englishman Charles Parsons, the compressed-air loudspeaking machine was first offered by the Gramophone and Typewriter Co. in 1904. Its acceptance in England must have been encouraging enough to warrant Victor's interest in acquiring American rights to the machine. Yet only 500 Auxetophones were manufactured and sold by Victor. What was the cause of the Auxetophone's ultimate failure?

Erudite readers are probably thinking about the well-known tendency of the Auxetophone soundbox to fail due to the crystallization of oil vapor combusted within the compressor. This technical flaw was at least partially remedied in 1909 with motor and soundbox modifications. Evidently sales did not escalate to the point that Victor felt justified in building more Auxetophones. What killed the Auxetophone was not so much a technical defect as a technological inconvenience. Assuming that the machine was performing flawlessly, it still used a spring motor to drive the turntable. The old problem of attending to a record every two or three minutes remained. And speaking of records, where was one to store them? A patron spending an hour in a restaurant might be exposed to 20 or 25 different selections. He or she might not wish to hear the same selections when they returned for lunch the following day. For a large and varied program of music, a cabinet would be necessary to hold the records. Something more like a...Victrola.

If the musical program was to be used as background music, as in a restaurant, the volume could not be so loud as to interfere with relaxed conversation. Some method of volume modulation would be desirable. Perhaps doors...as on a Victrola.

A restaurant or hotel or any business is designed to generate an income exceeding the cost of operation. An Auxetophone was priced at \$500. For just one-half that sum, one could purchase a Victrola XVI. If the establishment were cozy, a Victrola IV could do the job for \$15.

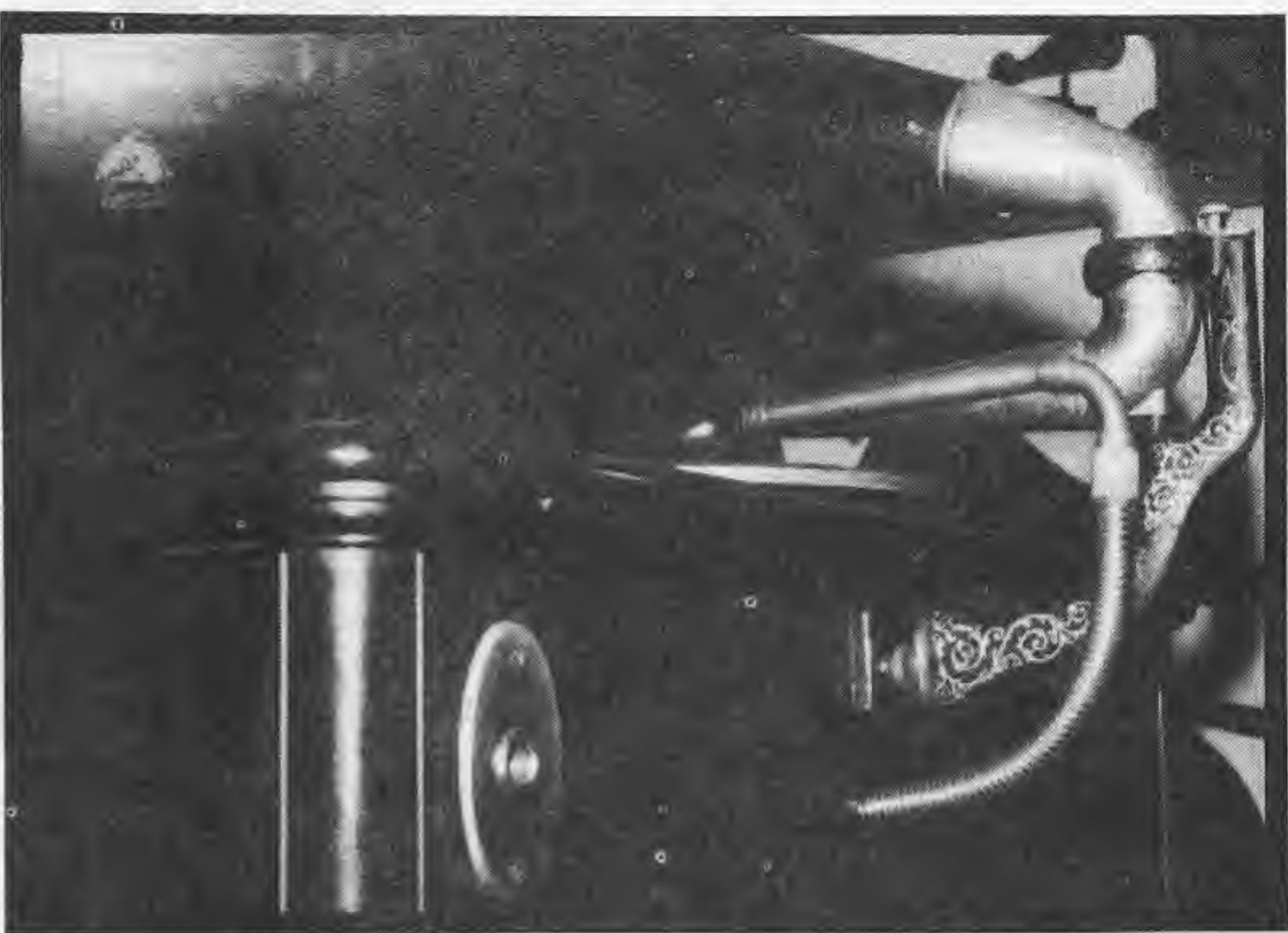
Why did it take twelve years to sell 500 Auxetophones? What was it that made the Auxetophone an extravagant luxury of limited utility? The Victor Talking Machine Company!

\* \* \*

George Paul can be contacted at 28 Aldrich Street, Gowanda, NY 14070.

### For Jazz Fans

The IAJRC convention will be held this year in Cleveland, Ohio the weekend of August 4th. For more information, contact: David Goldenberg, 840 Winter Rd., Rydal, PA 19046.



Illustrations

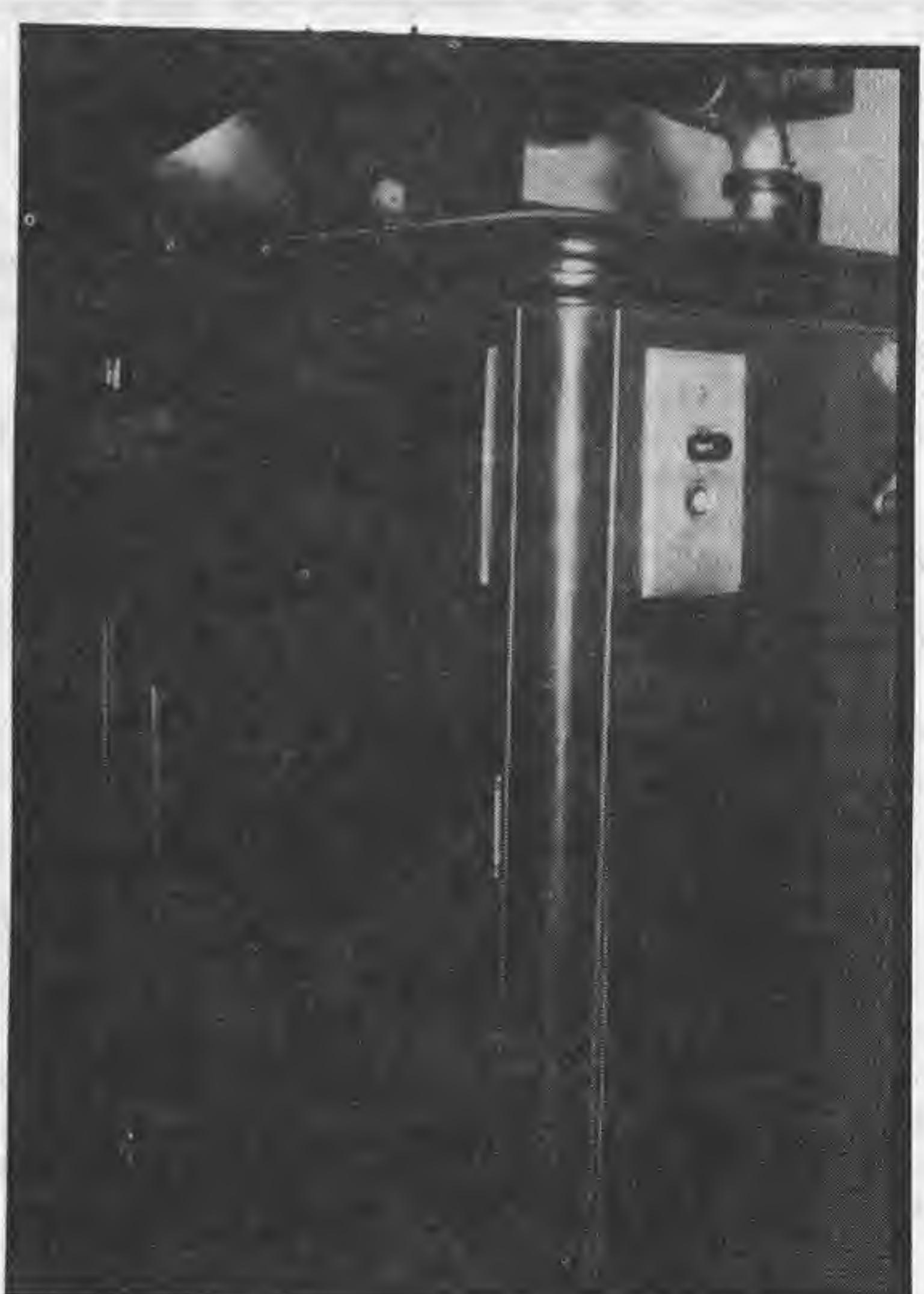
above: The Victor Auxetophone. The individual pictured is a harmless lunatic who thinks he is leaning on a Victrola.

top right: Compressed air tube running to the soundbox. The soundbox and elbow are not in place in this picture.

right: Front panel of the Auxetophone. Just below the decal can be seen the area where a dealer's plate was once tacked.

below: The Auxetophone soundbox, serial #157.

below right: Switch to activate the compressor, housed in the lower portion of the cabinet.



JOHN A. PETTY

by Steve Ramm

On Friday, April 6, 1990 the record collecting fraternity lost a truly unselfish and caring friend, John Petty. Collectors learning about his untimely death through these pages are probably feeling the shock that many felt when learning the news.

John was a fellow collector, but, more importantly, he was my best friend. He was many collectors' best friend. Also their teacher, correspondent, repairman, discographer, source of records and a connection with other collectors.

It was on the 6th, while trying to fix one of John's "junkers" (cars he kept for parts...John never threw anything away!), that his life ended much too early. While he was attempting to pull off a muffler, or similar part, the car fell off the blocks it was mounted on and landed on his chest. He apparently died instantly. As John always gave and shared what he had in life, he was able to give his eyes to the eye bank. This was a typically unselfish deed of his.

Many of us knew John first as a collector, the "world's authority on Uncle Josh an his creator, Cal Stewart." Many referred to John as "Uncle Josh Petty," and some of the stories he'd tell me during our long tape correspondence sounded just like a Cal Stewart record. Others, closer to his home in North Carolina, knew him as The Reverend Petty, for John was a Methodist minister for over 34 years. Over 1100 of his neighbors and parishoners attended his memorial service.

I met John through a mail correspondence in 1973 through another very close friend, the late Hal Birdsall. Shortly thereafter John, Hal and I formed an inseparable friendship maintained solely through tape correspondence. Most other collectors knew John only through the mail and his many articles on varied record topics for In the Groove, The New Amberola Graphic and Hillandale News (London). Those attending the annual Phonovention in Michigan got to know John in person. (John used to leave Michigan after the dinner on Saturday night and drive straight through to North Carolina so he could preach to his two congregations on Sunday morning.) For those who couldn't attend the Phonovention, John made video tapes of the event and sold them below his cost. He was certainly the most unselfish man I've ever known.

John was lucky to have a wonderful and caring wife of 35 years. Yvonne shared his enthusiasm for people and understood the complications of living with a record collector. As part of the ministry system in North Carolina, the Pettys had to change congregations every five or six years. With John, this meant moving his record collection as well as his stock for "the bid list I'm going to put out next year...MAYBE!" John and Yvonne were planning to move again this July first to take on a new challenge and a new church. John is survived by Yvonne and two married daughters, Debra and Beverly. He had seven grandchildren, who he hoped would continue his collecting. One sister and four brothers are also living in the eartern United States.

A number of collectors have made suggestions that a suitable memorial be made to John within the record collecting world. Most of you readers have benefitted from John's knowledge or from something he gave you. Hopefully we can all repay John for favcrs granted. It's doubtful that the debt will ever be fully paid. If you have suggestions, please let me hear from you. If you just want to reminisce or talk about John, please let me know.

Cards of condolence may be sent to Mrs. Yvonne Petty, Rt. 2, Box 172, Hiddenite, NC 28636

Comments, if any, to Steve Ramm, 420 Fitzwater St., Philadelphia, PA 19147.

## Edison Matrix to Catalogue Reference

by Tom Hawthorn



Here is a nifty little list I hope GRAPHIC readers will find helpful. I'm sure you are familiar with the period of time when Edison dropped the catalog numbers from the edge of his discs and did not put them on the label. We all have some of these un-numbered discs in our collections, and if you file in numeric order as I do, this can be a real problem! You can take Ron Dethlefson's book and use Ray Wile's discography as a cross-reference and eventually come up with a number, but the process is time consuming to say the least.

Using Ray Wile's excellent Diamond Disc listing, I took all the release dates from July 1918 through June 1919 of the domestic series and entered the catalog and matrix numbers into a database on my computer. I then indexed on the matrix to create a numerical list of matrix numbers and their respective catalog numbers. To my knowledge, this is the first time this has been tried.

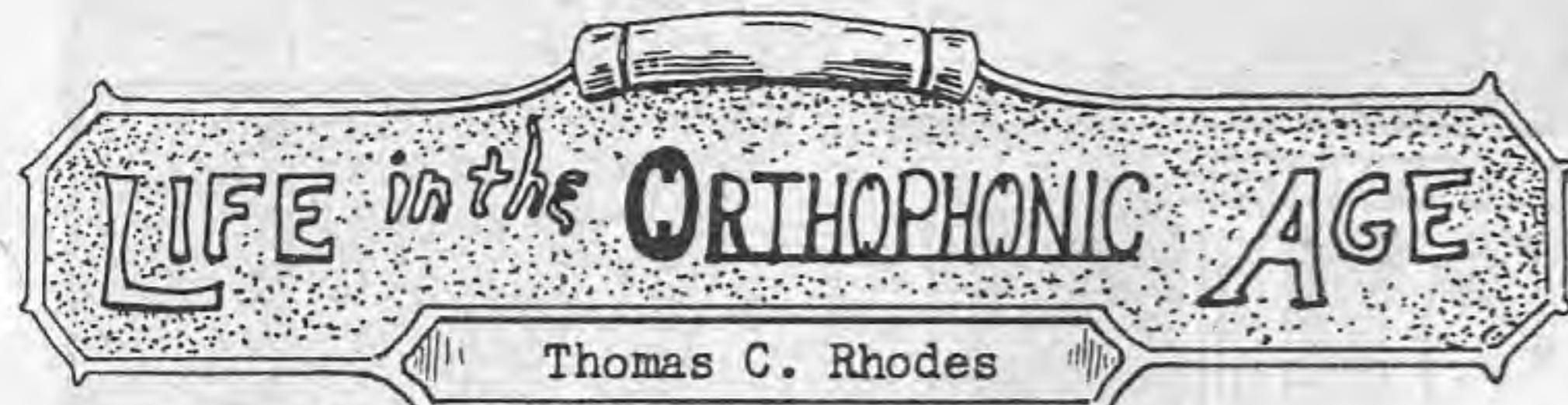
Now, we have the mysterious Edison Diamond Disc with only the matrix numbers visible (say, 5522 & 6031). Presto! Here is the reference to find its catalog number...50485. I may be a little off in the dates that Edison dropped the catalog number from the disc, but I probably have 90% of them in the year I ran the database. Also, there will be the occasional pressings of earlier catalog numbers made during that time period which, of course, will not show up. But all in all, I've found this to be a really useful tool in quickly identifying many discs in my holdings with no visible catalog numbers.

Note: Matrix number #6473 is a possible error. Wile shows the "R" side of 80446 as 6743, but this is actually a Sergei Rachmaninoff matrix number for Diamond Disc #82202. The best guess is that the two middle numbers of this matrix got reversed in Ray's book.

(Editor's note: Collectors might like to photocopy the next 2 pages onto a piece of oaktag to keep with their Diamond Discs for handy reference. We wish that dealers would also put this guide to good use when listing Edison records for sale so that catalogue numbers are properly identified. Comments, additions, corrections to Tom Hawthorn, 2143-A Second Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95818.)

MATRIX	CATALOG		5487	80431		5918	80404
			5503	80388		5925	80409
3563	80411		5522	50485		5926	80409
3805	82136		5531	80388		5932	50472
3857	82136		5537	80439		5937	82134
4063	82156		5538	80439		5940	80396
4092	80408		5543	82147		5941	80396
4427	80443		5545	82147		5942	82550
4436	80437		5553	50470		5944	80406
4581	80437		5563	50484		5948	82550
4632	80414		5589	80455		5952	50481
4694	50484		5602	50515		5956	50469
4698	80393		5616	50482		5957	50469
4711	80450		5618	80391		5958	50480
4767	80448		5631	50515		5962	50468
4770	82562		5674	80410		5965	80399
4835	80455		5678	50499		5966	82551
4870	50513		5688	80414		5970	80450
4982	50487		5707	80392		5972	82549
5000	80432		5723	50470		5973	80449
5062	82154		5742	80432		5975	50478
5066	80436		5747	82135		5976	50473
5079	80410		5748	82135		5980	82148
5120	82153		5759	82154		5983	50513
5121	80451		5763	82140		5984	80430
5122	80451		5764	82139		5988	82155
5126	80416		5770	82141		5990	50516
5168	80397		5772	80393		5992	82551
5189	82552		5775	50500		5993	50475
5210	50466		5782	80398		5994	50473
5220	82555		5830	80436		5995	50478
5223	50466		5838	82560		5999	82134
5229	80456		5839	82141		6000	82549
5275	80389		5841	80397		6001	82138
5280	80399		5853	80395		6004	80442
5284	80452		5859	80395		6006	50505
5285	80452		5864	80390		6009	80401
5292	50499		5865	80390		6010	80400
5298	80398		5874	80438		6013	80430
5305	80416		5878	50471		6014	82139
5347	82129		5879	50471		6015	80402
5348	80420		5882	82155		6018	80401
5363	80389		5886	82158		6019	50488
5415	80413		5888	50468		6020	50474
5428	83074		5895	80412		6021	50475
5431	80443		5898	80441		6022	80400
5442	80392		5899	80441		6023	50473
5449	80431		5900	50487		6024	80402
5450	80391		5903	50481		6025	50479
5460	82129		5911	80403		6026	50479
5464	83074		5912	80405		6030	50472
5469	50480		5915	80403		6031	50485
5475	50506		5916	80405		6033	50486
5481	80411		5917	80404		6034	50482

10.	6041	80434	6199	50505	6398	50521
	6047	82137	6205	50491	6398	50521
	6050	50489	6207	50493	6401	80445
	6052	82138	6208	50493	6408	80434
	6054	50490	6211	50508	6409	50506
	6056	82143	6212	50508	6411	82151
	6059	80426	6217	82145	6414	50503
	6062	82144	6223	82562	6417	80435
	6062	82144	6226	50495	6418	82151
	6065	50488	6227	80423	6419	80440
	6072	50490	6227	50497	6420	82150
	6073	80449	6230	50498	6425	82555
	6077	80408	6231	80423	6427	50507
	6087	50492	6234	50495	6429	80453
	6089	80422	6235	80425	6430	82150
	6090	80422	6235	80415	6433	80435
	6091	50520	6239	82145	6434	50511
	6095	82142	6242	80420	6435	50504
	6104	80413	6244	82146	6438	50497
	6109	80412	6246	82146	6440	50477
	6113	50486	6248	82553	6446	82558
	6115	80407	6253	82557	6447	82556
	6116	80407	6254	80425	6448	80440
	6117	80427	6256	80415	6449	50512
	6119	50489	6266	80446	6451	80453
	6122	50500	6280	80424	6453	50501
	6123	80406	6281	80424	6454	50501
	6125	50492	6288	80419	6455	80445
	6127	80428	6289	80419	6459	80444
	6128	80429	6292	50507	6461	50503
	6129	80428	6303	50476	6462	80454
	6130	80429	6305	82560	6469	80444
	6133	80427	6309	82149	6472	50502
	6135	50483	6316	82553	6473*	80446
	6136	50483	6320	50476	6474	50502
	6140	50498	6331	50496	6475	82559
	6145	80417	6335	82149	6476	82559
	6146	80417	6344	80447	6477	80448
	6152	50494	6349	82157	6481	82156
	6153	50491	6353	50477	6484	82558
	6155	80421	6354	50496	6487	80447
	6156	80421	6357	80456	6492	80454
	6157	50494	6358	80442	6502	50510
	6158	82142	6359	82554	6503	50510
	6160	50504	6361	82158	6504	50511
	6162	80418	6364	80433	6505	50520
	6163	80418	6365	82554	6505	50520
	6165	82153	6369	82157	6509	50509
	6167	80426	6370	50514	6510	50519
	6170	82143	6371	50514	6513	50512
	6176	82140	6372	80433	6525	50519
	6186	82152	6376	82556	6540	50509
	6187	82152	6381	82557	6587	82561
	6194	82552	6387	82561	* Possible error; see introduction	
	6198	50521	6389	50516		



### Collecting Orthophonics - Part IV

In the last column, some "sound ideas" were offered, and six very basic terms were given. It is now a good place and time to dwell in detail on these words and their relationship to reproduction. Lastly, a few pointers will be given on sealing a Victrola.

In general, it is a very good idea for the collector, upon first hearing an underwhelming specimen of Orthophonic (or any) Victrola, to keep in mind the following: If it sounded this bad when new, it would never have sold! This thought is needed because of the tendency of even the journeyman collector to take middling performance at face value. To the best scientific knowledge, the human ear has had no huge evolutionary leap between the turn of this century and now. Therefore, why is it always taken for granted that the strident, raucous noise coming from any Victrola, or like device, is how the machine was meant to sound? Granted, until the advent of the Orthophonic, the frequency range of most machines was quite small, but within this limited range the sound should have been tolerable to the human ear. After all, people interested in good music in the closing years of the 19th century would most likely have heard the majestic sonorities of the great Chickering grand pianos. Listeners so impressed could hardly have put up with anemic squawk posing as sound reproduction. It is to be regretted that so few people in this hobby have heard the early 20th century Victors and Edisons with rebuilt reproducers and accessory large horns. So many people have heard the lesser Victrolas with horrible No. 2 sound boxes playing worn out disks at fleamarkets. No wonder the legend of the "squeaky Victrola" has been so hardy.

The word "blast" was known even in the late 19th century. It stood for that raucous high pitched distortion which seemed to plague loud high register reproduction. Advertisements of this early period were full of phonographs claiming to play "without blast". This ear splitting din can be caused by mistracking, when the needlebar sets up violent contradictory vibrations in the diaphragm (mica in the pre-Orthophonic days). A diaphragm so shaken and bent cannot oscillate in a manner helpful to orderly soundwave transmission. Of course, lack of compliance in the diaphragm itself (mica has structural problems all its own) only made things worse. It should be pointed out that not all high pitched racket can be blamed on the reproducer. In the acoustic recording method, the collecting horn suffered from its own sympathetic resonances which were fed to the poorly damped cutting head, causing even a good needle to trace false signal. Yet, why would any company, least of all Victor, make and sell machines with this defect? The answer is, of course, they didn't. This is clear upon hearing an expertly rebuilt Exhibition soundbox play through a large horned Victor (especially the Schoolhouse) or one of the later wider horned Victrola models. Such sound is limited, both in tonal and dynamic range, but it is a clear, reasonably smooth signal.

Enter the Orthophonic. Patrons of the Victrola were rewarded then (and present collectors now) with an instrument that finally reached what had only been dreamt with the earlier models. Sparkling treble,

strong midrange and deep bass were (and still can be) its hallmarks. How are these tonal qualities so carefully reproduced? This can only be answered by more Orthophonic theory. Another term is needed: Phase relation.

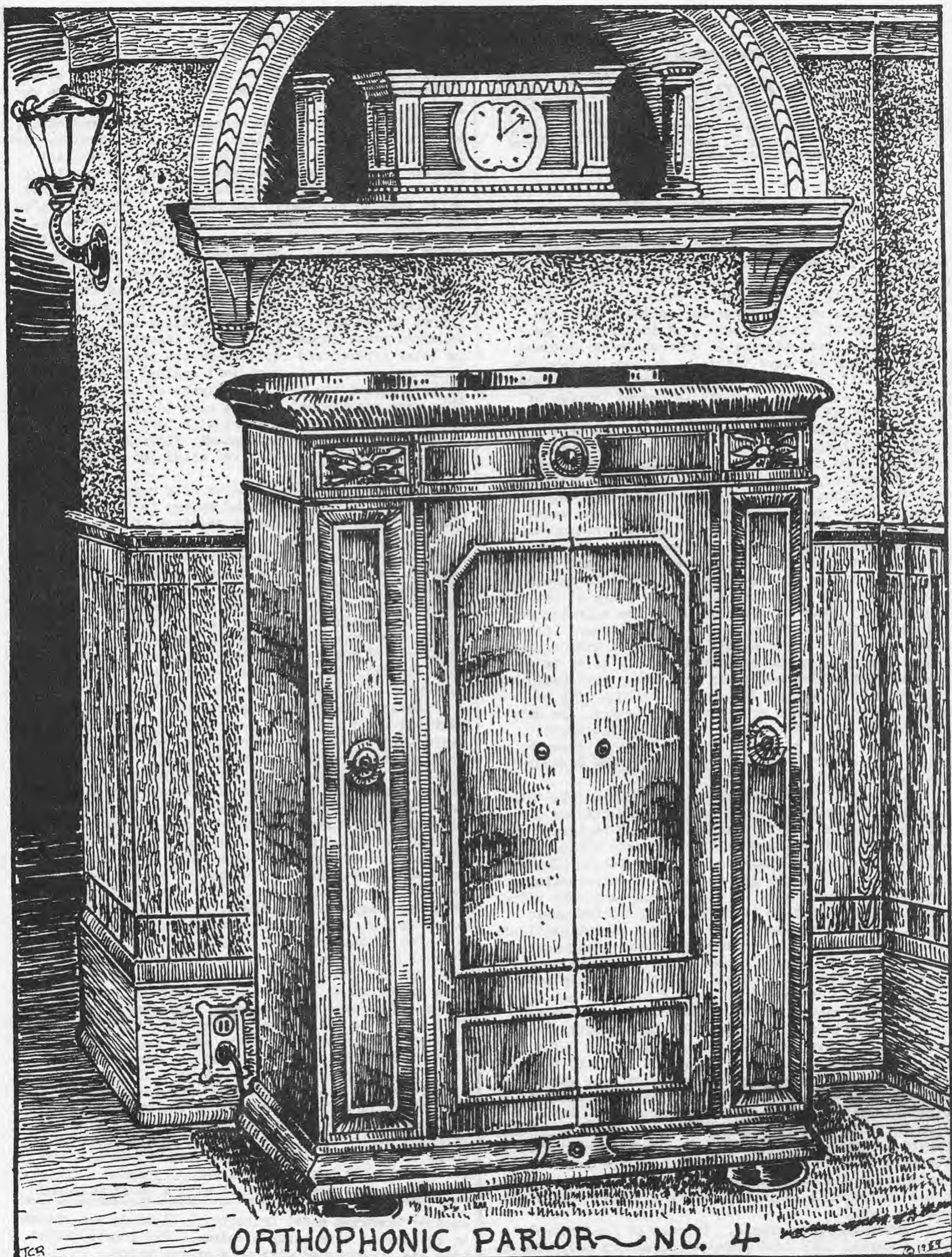
Although most famous because of his introduction, along with Henry C. Harrison, of the electrical recording method, Joseph P. Maxfield was also a brilliant thinker on the general subject of sound reproduction; he devoted many years, starting right after the First World War, to its theory and practice. His best definition (found in Gelatt and others) was when the recording method preserved the same phase relationships found in the source. Regarding the Orthophonic process, this would involve a situation where the tonal (and volume) content of any organized sound (musical performance) can be picked up by the microphone, transferred to the precisely damped cutting head, whereupon it would trace groove undulations (waveform analog) to be later pressed and replayed by the reproducing instrument (mechanical/electrical analog) in such a way as to preserve the original balance of the source. This same requirement applies also to dynamic range, which is related to and works with tonal balance. Within its limits the Orthophonic Victrola recordings did (and still can do) a first class job of reproducing said phase relations.

When all the tonal aspects of a recording are in phase, meaning when the sound energy is "properly sequential" over the frequency spectrum of the source signal, all three areas of tone, treble, midrange and bass, will radiate and be amplified through the exponential horn to produce a natural sounding result. All frequency bands will be in the right relation to one another, without attenuation or, worse, exaggeration. Mr. Maxfield was very careful that the Orthophonic reproducer be matched to the volume and expansion rate of the speaker, thus the special logarithmic tone chamber. The "Credenza" model was almost literally copied from the prototype made by Maxfield.

Another benefit of correct phase relationships is that the music will have a certain "spaciousness"; there will be some reverberation to make the sound lifelike instead of anechoic and dead. Naturally, advertising claims by Victor (as can be read on the old record sleeves of the latter Twenties) that the then recording techniques brought every concert hall ambience into the listener's living room must be taken with a grain of salt. In fact, the least tonally pleasing classical recordings are those which have too much "atmosphere". Yet this is due mostly to poor recording set-ups rather than to Maxfield's ideas. In no way does his theory rely on the truth of this "effect" as found in recordings of the period.

The Orthophonic tone chamber was the only amplifier of the period designed to reproduce a wide range (100 Cps to 5000 Cps) in correct phase. Of course, in this era of super electronic fidelity and compact disks, this range does not seem very wide. Yet, in 1925 there was truly nothing like it. Also, as any musical readers of this column would know, middle C has about 132 vibrations (or cycles) per second; a good grand piano can only play a high tone of 4,224 Cps; the piccolo at its highest note only reaches 4,752 Cps; thus there is no pure tone above the capacity of the Orthophonic tone chamber to reproduce. The practical range in music can be enclosed within the seven octave range of 40 Cps to 4000 Cps, all but the very lowest well within the bounds of a larger Orthophonic Victrola. It plays almost all of it with a smoothness and

Another Credenza model Orthophonic Victrola was chosen to illustrate this issue's column. But look closely! This one is equipped with an electric motor.



ORTHOPHONIC PARLOR~NO. 4

balance that can neither be denied nor disproven. It can only do this great feat, however, if said tone chamber is properly sealed. Without airtightness, tonal loss, especially in the precious bass registers, can and will follow.

All Victrolas, indeed all talking machines, should be sealed. For the owners of pre-Orthophonic machines, please follow the advice given by Mr. Jerry Donnell in the "Vintage Vignettes" in the January, 1989 issue (#67) of the Graphic. For the owners of Orthophonics, much more will have to be done, as the tone chambers are larger and, with re-entrants, more complex. A detailed step-by-step procedure will appear in the next installment of this column.

Why the big deal over sealing? Well for one thing, it is impossible to test an Orthophonic (or any) soundbox with reliability in anything but an airtight passageway. Review Mr. Donnell's troubles with the Grafonola. Many over eager buffs can't wait to adjust or rebuild their soundbox and are doubly disappointed when, after all their patient work, their dream machine still squawks like a kid's toy. Even the mighty Borgia or Credenza fails to thrill. With any talking machine, and especially the Orthophonic, all adjustments must be made with a tone chamber as airtight as human hands can render. In the correction of any mechanical device, adjustments must go from the passive to the active elements, to avoid missing an important factor. The key word is "system". One cannot simply tinker with one isolated part and expect perfection. Everything must work together in harmony.

#### GUILT - FREE PLAYING

by R. J. Wakeman

At the Waltrip Laboratory, Box 1404, Leveland, Texas 79336, they make a keen distinction between "Listeners" and "Collectors" in the world of early phonographs and records. If you are a "Collector" who will only occasionally play a record on your Victrola the rest of this article may not be of interest to you. Or if you are one who plays records often but only with a feather-weight pickup and an electronic amplifier, this will also not interest you. But if you are a serious "Listener" who just about daily and seriously plays the pre-1935 78 rpm records with the original phonograph, this is for you!

As a result of thirty plus years of working with early phonograph reproducers, the Waltrip Laboratory has made a number of important observations and conclusions. They can be summarized by stating:

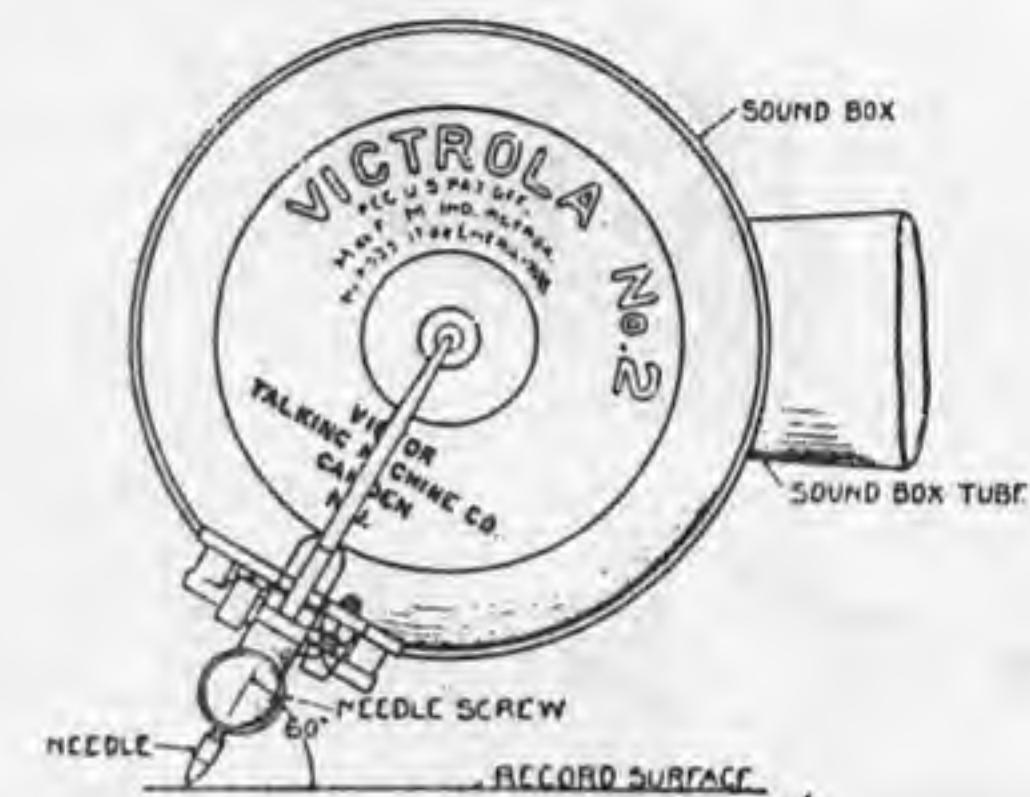
All phonograph diaphragms vibrate in all directions with a multitude of complexities. For maximum sound reproduction they should be adjusted to have as much freedom as possible.

To attain this ideal condition (called "compliance"), a reproducer has to be carefully assembled and adjusted.

The mica so commonly found in lateral reproducers can vary greatly in thickness and flexibility. It may be that sunlight, air, and time have hardened most of the original mica diaphragms. Only occasionally at the Waltrip Laboratory do they come across a very compliant original diaphragm. For making reproducer restorations they prefer to use new and more compliant mica.

Next, gaskets used to mount the mica should be very soft. Original Victor gasket tubing contained a very high gum content, which over time has greatly hardened and given the impression to many that gasket tubing should be fairly firm. As such, the rubber tubing sold today by most parts dealers is much too hard for ideal diaphragm vibration. More modern types of non-rubber gasketing material is now recommended for restoring reproducers.

Then comes the stylus bar. I have been asked by several budding collectors how to adjust the tiny screws at the spring tension balance for the Victor Exhibition and Victrola No. 2 reproducers. They complain that adjustments do not seem to make much difference in the sound reproduction. The answer is that the adjustments make an enormous difference! The spring tensions allow the needle to shift and equalize and to hold the needle in the groove, especially as the needle tends to ride up the sides of a loud groove.



If the reproducer has the stylus bar bolted onto a petrified diaphragm that is mashed (perhaps crookedly) between too-hard rubber gaskets, there will not be much effect on the tone or volume when the balance springs are adjusted, but it will be massive trauma to the record grooves!

The tension of the springs should be adjusted and balanced so lightly and precisely that on loud passages the rear balance beam can microscopically (but completely) lift off the fulcrum rest. Obviously this is not easy to do. It is not uncommon for Mr. Waltrip to spend hours just balancing the stylus bar when restoring a reproducer. But the results are worth it! A reproducer with a fully compliant diaphragm which is suspended in semi-soft gasketing and has a carefully adjusted stylus bar can give the most ideal sound reproduction and at the same time cause very little needle wear.

The proof of this comes when playing a record in excellent condition. The steel needle will not form a shiny facet at the tip, but will be worn so slightly and evenly that it takes the impression of the ridges in the sides of the record grooves! There will also be markedly little record surface noise. To summarize -- a fully compliant and well adjusted reproducer can provide guilt-free playing!

Fully compliant and adjusted reproducers work (vibrate) all the time in sympathy with every sound in the room and they should be allowed to vibrate as freely as possible. Thus it is recommended when not playing a record that these reproducers be left "up" with the needle off the turntable or needle rest.

One final comment -- for the back-mount external horn and all the internal horn phono-

(concl. p. 14, col. 2)

# Vintage Vignettes

by David Milefsky

## "The 'Short-Form' of a Duck"

Vignette No. 13 is dedicated to collectors who have, at one time or other, felt that certain of their prizes were nothing less than "ducky," and to Peter Dilg, who recently lost to death a friend who collected 'duck' recordings.



As Cal Stewart, cleverly disguised as 'Uncle Josh,' might have begun, "Yep, I gone and done it..." I truly "did do it" upon reaching for the faithful dictionary and found in hand a copy of the Fieldbook of Natural History instead. The room in which those two books lay side by side was dark, so I pulled the wrong one from the shelf.

Oddly enough, the subject of this installment deals with ducks, so perhaps fate was in my favor after all. Let's see now.

Long about mid-April, the plague of taxes waves about the heads of the general U.S. public and, in reflection thereon, we hope that all readers are gainfully recovering from the forms of the IRS. But who in history ("natural" or not) wished to be reminded of taxes, especially those on the paying end? Hopefully, the following proposition will not deter readers from taxing their imaginations or otherwise sharing their knowledge with us. The question is, how was the duck-quack effect achieved on these records?

- 1) Edison Diamond Disc #51679-L, "Love Bound" by Jack Stillman's Orchestra
- 2) Ed. D.D. #51674-R, "In Your Green Hat" by the Tennessee Happy Boys, with vocal by Arthur Hall (The novel by Michael Arlen, "The Green Hat" was published in 1924 and surely was the inspiration for the song.)
- 3) Brunswick 4755, "Mysterious Mose" by The Radio All Star Novelty Orchestra, with vocal by Dick Robertson

As for the Edisons, I first heard them in the house of Jerry Donnell, who asked if I had any notion of "what that 'noise' is." Although I had no ready answer, it was fortunate that I came equipped with a tape recorded which copied the mysterious sounds for further study. Upon playing the tape to musically oriented listeners, these people had the following comments.

Dave Sager of New Orleans, an excellent trombonist, said, "That's bizarre! I think that someone in the band suggested, 'Look what I can do,' and the lead-

er was impressed enough to employ such talent." Dave explained further that he was pretty much convinced the "quacking solos" were not made from the mouthpiece of a brass instrument.

Artist and musician Jane Caspar had a discussion with Jerry which was charming indeed. They recalled childhood toys which may have been responsible for "the call of the ducks." Among these devices was a cardboard box of cylindrical shape with crank on top that produced "barnyard sounds"; a washboard surfaced in glass rubbed with a wooden stick; and a duck-caller in the hands of a magician!

My feeble suggestion was the "palm in the armpit" effect which was, and probably always will be, achieved by high school sophomores in a lockerroom.

The game is afoot. What quacked?

David Milefsky can be reached at Rt. 1, Box 48-A, Boyce, VA 22620.

(cont. from p. 13)

graphs the tone arm-to-horn-throat connection is a serious air leak. A few drops of oil or grease is not adequate sealant. Heavy packing with wheel bearing grease is recommended to seal the leak.

# # # #

Comments may be addressed to R. J. Wakeman c/o Plant Path. Dept., U. C. Davis, Davis, California 95616.

## Gary's Scrapbook

(a variety of phono-related clippings from the pages of old Popular Mechanics, Boy Mechanics, etc., provided to us by Gary Stevenson.)

### How to Work Old Phonograph Records into Useful Articles

Old phonograph records provide a cheap and satisfactory insulating material



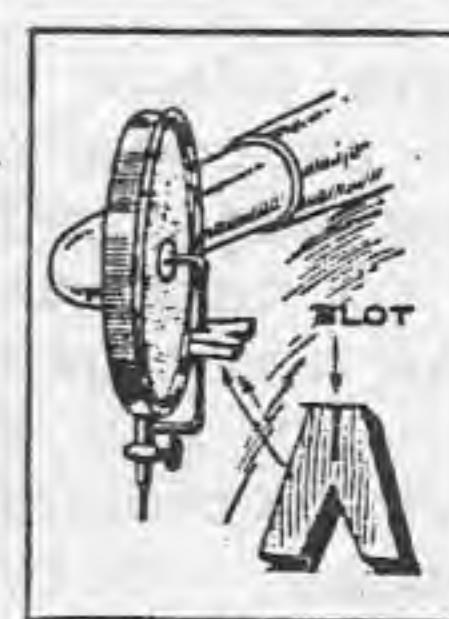
By Applying Heat and Working the Material While Hot, Old Phonograph Records Provide a Cheap and Satisfactory Insulating Material for the Amateur Electrician

that is readily formed into almost any shape by the application of heat. Disks are cut by pressing a tin can, or piece of tubing, that has been heated almost red-hot, against the record, as shown in Fig. 1. If a tin can is used, a hole is cut in the bottom so that the disk can be pushed out before it has a chance to "freeze" to the inside of the can. As shown in Fig. 2, a tube, or bushing, can be made by heating a strip of the record and forming it around a rod, or tube, of the desired diameter. If the strip is too long, the surplus is cut off with scissors, while warm; it cuts clean and sharp. Bring the edges

close together and pass a hot nail, or other piece of heated metal, over the joint to weld the seam. Figure 3 shows a flanged bushing, the joint being welded as described. A little practice is required to make these joints, but the work is easily done. A very neat head can be made for a screw by melting some pieces of old record in the cover of a can. Do not try to heat it too much; when the material is soft enough to gather on the head of the screw, it is sufficiently warm. Roll the screw around until a lump of sufficient size has been collected, as in Fig. 4, and form it with the fingers, pressing it tightly around the screw head, to make a good connection. While still soft, the head may be pressed into a mold, which may be simply a smoothly bored hole in a piece of wood, or the material may be allowed to cool and afterward finished with sandpaper.—Howard Greene, New York, N. Y.

### Softening Tone of Phonograph

The attachment shown in the drawing is cut from a piece of thick sheet rubber, leather, or similar flexible material, in the form shown, and fitted over the needle bar of the phonograph reproducer to subdue the tone of the instrument. In applying or removing the "mute," for such it properly can be called, the ends are pressed together



by the fingers; this expands the slot in the opposite side and makes its application or removal very simple.

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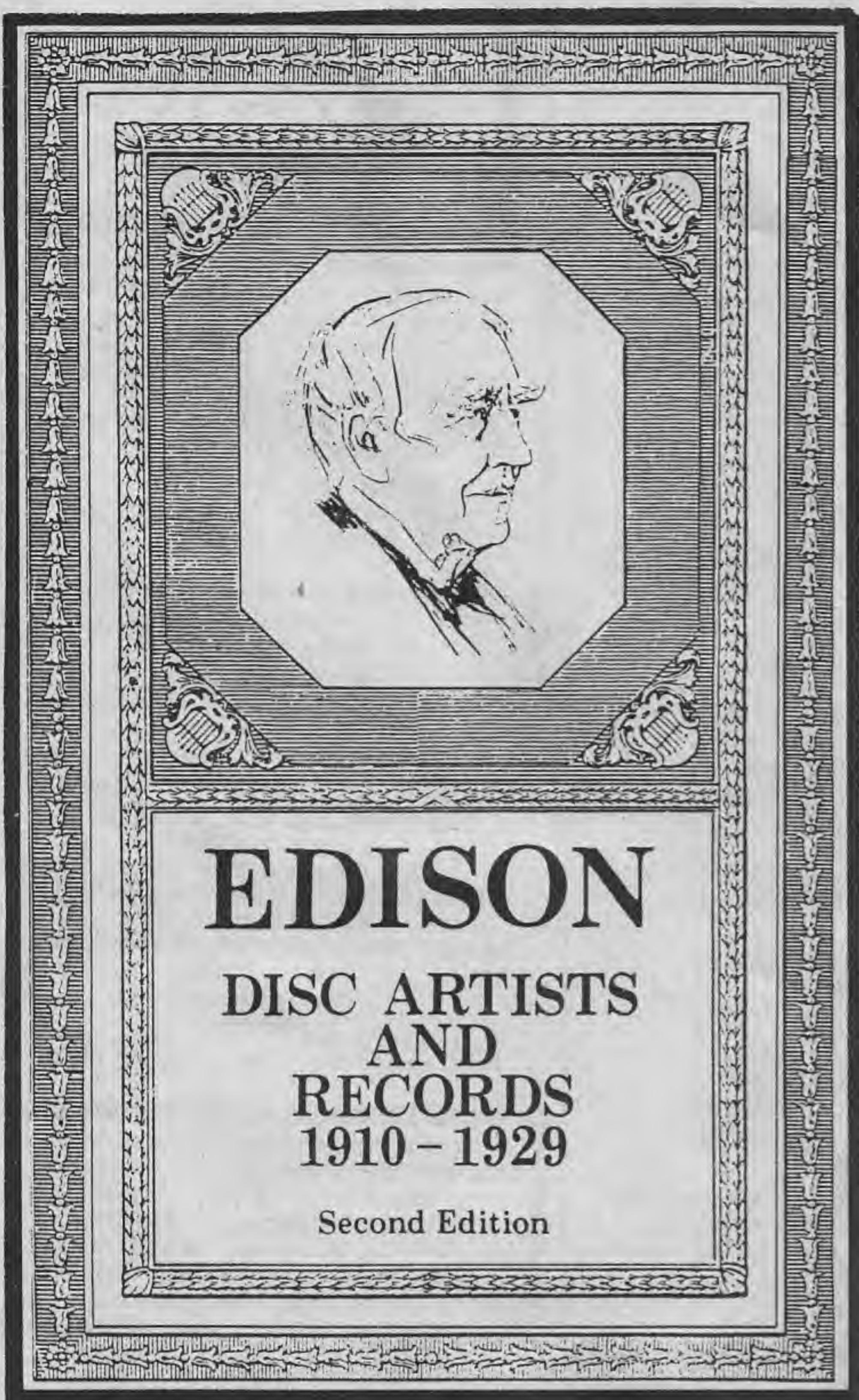
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